

“Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID 19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” in LLDCs

Non paper for the 2022 HLPF

1. Context: The HLPF 2022 and the SDGs reviewed during the Forum

The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, that serves as the global framework for implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), seeks to put the world on a more sustainable pathway by 2030. Global progress on the implementation of the Agenda and of the SDGs is followed up every year at the UN High level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF), which convenes under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

In 2022, the HLPF will take place from 5 July to 7 July, and again from 11 July to 15 July, on the theme “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID 19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” The Forum provides an important platform for landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) to share their specific

percentage of population vaccinated against COVID-19 in each LLDC as on 2 February 2022. Annex 2 focuses on the total of COVAX vaccines delivered in LLDCs as of 9 February 2022.⁸

Because of the multiple factors mentioned above, the pandemic is impacting the sustainable development of the LLDCs across many areas, including strained health services, learning and job losses, gender inequality, increased poverty and food insecurity, disruptions in global supply chains, declining exports, decreased transport services, low levels of private investment and a near halt in tourism (United Nations, 2021a).

The long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on development prospects and on the achievement of the SDGs are likely to be significant, as many LLDCs lack the resources and capacity to adopt the environmental, social and economic response needed to address it.

Assessment of progress achieved by the LLDCs on the five SDGs reviewed at the 2022 HLPF

SDGs 4 (quality education)

There was an improvement on some indicators in LLDCs related to quality education over the past 15 years. For example, the adjusted net enrollment rate in primary school (for boys and girls) increased from 31.0 percent in 2007 to 40.2 percent in 2019. Similarly, the proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications in primary education increased from 74.4 percent in 2000 to 78.1 percent in 2019 (United Nations, 2021e).

However, the COVID-19 pandemic had major disruptions on education, affecting education systems globally, and the most vulnerable learners the hardest (UNESCO, 2021b).

Recent data on duration of school closures show that in LLDCs, most countries (29 out of 32) had their schools fully closed between March 2020 and November 2021, for an average of 20 weeks⁹.

These data also show that in September and October of 2021, a minority of LLDCs (4 out of 32) had their schools fully closed for a period varying from more to 10 weeks. As a comparison, from March to August 2020, 29 out of 32 LLDCs had their schools fully closed for an average of 15 weeks. (Details on full and partial school closures are provided in Annex 3.)

is especially important to consider in LLDCs where e-learning (remote learning) options cannot always be implemented due to a lack of digital infrastructure and internet connectivity. According to the World Bank (2021a), the difficulty to access remote learning mixed with the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on family incomes, also increases the number of school dropouts, since students who missed school for an extended duration of time are more likely to not return.

SDG 5 (gender equality)

Gains have been made on several gender equality indicators until 2020. For instance, the proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before the age of 15 decreased from 13.2 percent in 2000 to 9.3 percent in 2020. However, this is still above the world average of 4.8 percent (in 2020). The proportion of girls aged 15-19 that have undergone female genital mutilation decreased from 54.8 percent in 2000 to 36.0 percent in 2020 (United Nations, 2021e).

In terms of gender equality in politics, the proportion of women in national LLDC parliaments increased from 7.8 percent in 2000 to 27.6 percent in 2021, higher than the world average of 25.6 percent (in 2021) (United Nations, 2021e; UN Women and IPU, 2021). Also, as of 1 January 2021, 11 LLDCs had women in the highest positions of State (either as Heads of State, Heads of government or speakers of parliament), namely: Ethiopia, Azerbaijan, Eswatini, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Malawi, Rwanda, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe (UN Women and IPU, 2021). Annex 4 provides a detailed account of the percentage of women in parliament in the 32 LLDCs.

Nonetheless, a substantial gender gap persists. According to the “[2021 Gender Equality Data](#)” (data provided Agency report)

Evidence shows that the impacts and implications of COVID-19 are exacerbating existing gender inequalities. The pandemic is also posing an additional burden for women and girls. Women have played a central role in the response to COVID-19 as frontline health workers, care providers, and as leaders of recovery efforts. Globally, they represent 70% of workers in the health and social sectors (United Nations, 2019), and as such they are more likely to be exposed to the virus. Also, 90 percent of women who lost their jobs in 2020 (worldwide) exited the labor force mostly due to intensified care responsibilities, and in 2020 only, women's employment declined by 5 percent, compared to 39 percent for men (United Nations, 2021c).

Additionally, the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have adversely affected progress towards gender equality globally: violence against women and girls has intensified, child marriage, on the decline in recent years, is expected to increase, and women have suffered an increased care work at home (United Nations, 2021b).

SDG 14 (life below water)

The ocean plays an important part in development due to its key role for trade, among other functions. Nonetheless, participation in the ocean economy is not inclusive, and LDCs are among those marginalized from that economy partly due to their geographical location.

Land degradation exacerbates extreme poverty and costs an estimated US\$ 127 billion per year (globally). In Africa, some countries have seen up to 95 per cent of their land affected by desertification, and the issue led to the displacement of millions of people in 2020 alone (UN General Assembly President, 2021).

The proportion of degraded land over total land area in LLDCs was estimated at 22.9 per cent in 2015, higher than the world average of 20 per cent (United Nations, 2021e). In response to this challenge, several countries embarked on the process of establishing national targets on Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)¹³. Among them, 31 LLDCs (all LLDCs except Afghanistan)¹⁴ prepared LDN targets, accompanied by LDN action plans and/or commitments and country reports¹⁵. In addition, many countries worldwide (covering 91 per cent of forest) committed to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030 by endorsing the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, announced during UN Climate Change Conference (COP 26) in November 2021. As of 4 March 2022, 24 LLDCs had endorsed that Declaration¹⁶.

In terms of biodiversity protection, the number of countries adopting relevant national legislation and adequately resourcing the prevention or control of invasive alien species was higher than the world average in 2016 and 2020 (United Nations, 2021e). Also, all the 32 LLDCs ratified the E am

Partnerships are even more important in the wake of the COVID 19 pandemic, which has worsened existing LLDC vulnerabilities

For instance, the introduction of stringent measures at the borders and in some cases, the closing of borders, has further increased LLDCs' trade costs and net import or export, further rendering LLDCs uncompetitive. The drastic fall of prices and demand for commodities due to the pandemic has impacted their balance of payments and increased their debt vulnerability. As such, in LLDCs, external debt has increased from an average of 11% of GDP in 2010 to 61% of GDP in 2019 and 9% of GDP in 2020. LLDCs are classified as being at high risk of debt distress whereas one is characterized as debt distressed¹⁰. (World Bank, 2022).

FDI flows to LLDCs also fell due to

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https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/WESP2022_web.pdf

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UN CHRLS, 2017. Issues Note: Enhancing implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Internal document.

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https://www.un.org/chills/sites/www.un.org.chills/files/impact_of_covid19_and_responses_in_ll

ANNEX 1: Percentage of population vaccinated against COVID-19 in LLDCs compared to the rest of the world (as of 2 February 2022)²²

Country	% of population with 1 dose or more	% of population fully vaccinated	Population (million)
All Countries	62.0		

ANNEX 3 School full and partial closures in LLDCs during the COVID pandemic²⁴

Counties	Full closure of schools (March August 2020) -	Partial closure of schools (March August 2020)	Full closure of schools (September October 2021)
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ANNEX 5 LLDCs that ratified the Biodiversity Convention and the Nagoya Protocol

Countries	Ratification of the Biological Convention (date of ratification)²⁶	Ratification of the Nagoya Protocol (date of ratification)²⁷
Afghanistan	2002 09 19	2018 06 06
América	1993 05 14	---